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SUBJECT: BELARUS: 2008-2009 INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS CONTROL STRATEGY  
REPORT (INCSR) PART I, DRUGS AND CHEMICAL CONTROL

MINSK 00000390 001.2 OF 004

11. Summary. Belarus remains a transit route for illicit drugs and drug precursors. Reports of drug use and drug-related crime in Belarus increased in 2009, although there is no evidence of large-scale drug production in the country. In October 2008 the government adopted a National Action Plan for 2009-2013 to coordinate government and NGO anti-drug efforts. In early 2009 the General Prosecutor's office drafted a bill on measures to prevent the drug use. The bill is expected to strengthen Belarusian laws against drug related crimes and will be submitted for parliamentary hearings in 2010. The government has taken regulatory steps to tighten control over precursors, smoking mixes and chewing tobacco. In addition, the government facilitated UN technical assistance programs. Some significant drug seizures were made during 2009, but the quantities involved may only hint at the true scale of trafficking. Law enforcement efforts suffer from a lack of coordination as well as inadequate funding and equipment shortfalls. The estimated number of drug users in Belarus increased from 2008, as well as the number of registered addicts. Some non-governmental organizations concerned with narcotics treatment and mitigation which were denied registration in previous years resumed their operations in 2008 and continued their work in 2009; in short, availability and quality of drug treatment services have improved somewhat but a great deal of work still remains. Belarus is a party to the 1988 UN Drug Convention. End Summary.

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Status of Country  
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12. Because of its geographical location, good transportation infrastructure, and the presence of corrupt in its law enforcement system, Belarus is an attractive transit route for illicit drugs. The lack of border controls between Belarus and Russia between these two countries make drug transit easier. Belarus' law-enforcement officials expect this problem to become more exacerbated when members of the Eurasian Economic Community (Belarus, Russia, Kazakhstan) create a customs union in 2010. There is no evidence of large-scale drug production in, or export from Belarus, although synthetic and plant-based narcotics production seems to be growing. Indications are that although plant narcotics dominate the illicit drug market (approximately 75-85% plant-based to 15-25% synthetic) the ratio appears to be shifting toward synthetic drugs. According to the data of Belarus' Health Ministry, while five years ago about 93% of drug addicts in Belarus consumed opium and its derivatives, at present these drugs are consumed by approximately 70%. Most synthetic drugs found in Belarus are produced in Poland, with a lesser amount produced in the Baltic states. Although law enforcement officials of neighboring countries maintain that

Belarus is a source of precursor chemicals, senior officials of Belarus' Interior Ministry flatly deny this. Whatever drug production and cultivation may exist in Belarus, they are not perceived in Belarus as the most pressing problem. Drug abuse prevention, treatment, and transit issues must be addressed first, they believe, if the country is to reach full compliance with the 1988 UN Drug Convention.

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Country Actions against Drugs in 2009  
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Policy Initiatives  
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13. In October 2008, the Belarusian government adopted the National Action Plan to counteract drug abuse and illicit drug trafficking and related crimes in Belarus. From 2009 through 2013, this Plan will consolidate the counter-drug efforts of all government agencies and NGOs under Interior Ministry coordination. Drug trafficking is routinely addressed at the regular meetings of the Domestic Belarus National Security Council's Interagency Committee on crime, corruption and drugs. Belarus' Health Ministry passed a resolution in July 2009, which expanded the National List of Narcotics, Psychotropic Substances and Their Precursors Subject to Government Control in Belarus to include 3,4 metilendioxfenil-2 and red phosphorus as well as synthetic cannabinoids (JWH-018 and CP-47, 497). The resolution will come into effect on January 1, 2010. A Presidential decree signed in September 2009 banned the production and trafficking of Nasvai, Snus and other non-smoking tobaccos. It will also come into effect on January 1, 2010. In an effort to prevent mailings of Cannabis seeds for their subsequent planting the government is contemplating introducing a ban on such mailings. No decision had been made as of late November 2009.

MINSK 00000390 002.2 OF 004

Law Enforcement Efforts  
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14. Media reports reflect more instances of local drug use and drug-related crimes in Belarus in 2009 than in 2008. Belarusian law enforcement authorities attribute this increase to improved detection but acknowledge that the actual underlying crime rate is also higher than a year ago. Police discovered four labs in the country that produced drugs.

15. Between January 1 and October 1, 2009, authorities seized approximately 17.3 kg of psychotropic substances and 586 kg of other drugs. Drugs seized (in kg) are as follows: Poppy Straw (353.2); Marijuana (213.4); Raw Opium (0.826); Heroin (3.144); Amphetamine (2.692); Methamphetamine (8.249); Ecstasy (MDMA) (0.069); Acetylated Opium (0.381); Hashish (4.420); Hashish oil (0.004); Cocaine (0.122); Extracted opium (8.715); Methadone (1.481); Morphine (0.006); Tetrahydrocannabinol (1.458). In the first six months of 2009, 1,021 people were convicted for drug related crimes in Belarus. In June through August within the framework of "Poppy" program police discovered 3,635 illegal plantations, and destroyed 75.8 tons of poppy straw and other drug containing plants from a total planting area which exceeded 390 square kilometers. Poppy straw is converted into acetylated opium, an injectable opiate that is cheaper and easier to produce than heroin and is widely abused throughout the region. The Interior and other government agencies conducted routine checks of legal manufacturers of narcotic and psychotropic substances within the framework of "Doping" program to ensure their compliance with production, storage and sales regulations, and to avoid the leak of such substances to the illicit drug market.

16. According to official statistics, 3,533 drug-related crimes were recorded in the first nine months of 2008. These comprised of: thefts of narcotics substances - 27, instances of illicit trafficking in controlled substances - 3,257, cultivation of narcotic plants - 32, street drug sales - 23, and the organizing

of illicit drug consumption rooms - 95. In September 2009, officers of Belarus' Interior Ministry, Customs Committee, KGB and Border Guard Committee actively participated in CANAL - 2009, a joint operation with Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) members aimed at the prevention and interdiction of illicit drug deliveries from Afghanistan and precursor deliveries to this country. During this operation, 104 drug-related crimes were recorded, criminal charges were brought against 92 persons, and more than 118.5 kilograms of narcotics were seized. The Interior Ministry officials conceded that official seizure figures do not reflect the true scale of the problem. In June 2009 presidents of the CSTO member states decided to make CANAL operation a permanent project. This is expected to help intensify their anti-drug efforts and improve results.

#### Corruption

17. As a matter of government policy, Belarus does not encourage or facilitate illicit production or distribution of narcotic or psychotropic drugs or other controlled substances, or the laundering of proceeds from illegal drug transactions. No senior officials of the government are known to engage in, encourage, or facilitate the illicit production or distribution of such drugs, or the laundering of proceeds from illegal drug transactions. A few high-level personnel within the Interior Ministry were charged for corruption in 2009, but none of the charges were drug-related. Nevertheless, the perception that corruption remains a serious problem was supported by the General Prosecutor Grigory Vasilevich in his November 2009 remark that through-September corruption has grown 20 percent year-on-year.

#### Agreements and Treaties

18. Belarus is a party to the 1988 UN Drug Convention, the 1961 UN Single Convention as amended by the 1972 Protocol, and the 1971 UN Convention on Psychotropic Substances. Belarus is also a party to the UN Convention against Corruption, and the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its protocols against migrant smuggling, trafficking in persons and manufacturing and trafficking in illegal firearms. Belarus is a member of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) with Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Russia and conducts joint counter-narcotics operations with those countries. Russia and Belarus planned to complete before the

MINSK 00000390 003.2 OF 004

end of 2008 a unified list of narcotics, psychotropic substances and their precursors subject to state control, in order to avoid criminal liability in one country for drugs which are legal in the other. According to Belarus' Interior Ministry, this job has not been completed as of mid-November 2009. No bilateral/multilateral agreements were reportedly concluded by Belarus in 2009.

#### Cultivation/Production

19. Some cultivation and production exists, but the scale is hard to estimate. Official government figures are unreliable. Precursor chemicals continue to be imported in volume, but the current legal structure makes it difficult to prevent their diversion to illicit uses. In 2007, 1,990 entities had licenses for manufacturing and storage of precursors and 15,000 employees have access to the substances. No up-to-date data are available but there is no indication that these numbers have significantly changed. Reported increases in demand for poppy-seed, and subsequent tenfold increase in price, prompted a December 2007 ban on retail sale of poppy at grocery markets. According to Belarus' Interior Ministry, domestic producers of illicit drugs sell them inside the country but also take every effort to sell them abroad, primarily in Russia, as prices on drugs there are generally higher than in Belarus. According to Belarus' Health

Ministry, such manufacturers work hard to invent new chemical substances, which possess drug effect and which as yet have not put on the National List of Narcotics, Psychotropic Substances and Their Precursors Subject to Government Control.

#### Drug Flow/Transit

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¶10. Heroin enters and transits Belarus from Afghanistan via Central Asia and Russia. Poppy straw, opium, and marijuana enter through Ukraine; ecstasy, amphetamines, hashish and marijuana come from Poland and Lithuania; cocaine comes from Latin America and precursor chemicals for the preparation of drugs from Russia. Heroin and methadone from Russia transit Belarus en route to Lithuania and other European countries. East-bound marijuana, hashish and cocaine transit Belarus and Lithuania as well. Press reports and anecdotal evidence continue to indicate that the control infrastructure along the border with Ukraine is particularly weak. In accordance with their bilateral customs union agreement, Belarusian border guards are not deployed on the border with Russia, which is policed by Russian forces. Apparently, customs officers currently inspect only five percent of all inbound freight nationally, and border guards often lack the training and equipment to conduct effective searches.

¶11. The Interior Ministry conducted routine checks of businesses, which export, import and transit chemical substances via Belarus. Through September 2009 the Interior Ministry officers discovered 36 channels of drug delivery and transit and seized 27 kg of hashish, 5 kg of amphetamine-type stimulants, 4000 tablets of ephedrine, more than 1.4 kg of heroine, about 1 kg of cocaine and other psychotropic substances.

#### Domestic Programs/Demand Reduction

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¶12. Belarusian authorities have begun to recognize the growing domestic demand problem, particularly among young people. Ministry of Health chief addiction officer Vladimir Maksimchuk announced that the number of registered drug users in the country has increased to nearly 12,000 registered drug abusers (as of October 27, 2009), but acknowledged that the actual number of users was approximately seven times higher. According to the Health Ministry official, approximately 120 drug addicts die in Belarus annually because of overdoses. The largest number of drug users is between 20 and 30 years old, and prevention programs in schools remain under-funded. News reports indicate that the ratio of consumers of oral (vs. injected) drugs is growing due to the relative ease of concealment of oral drug use. The government generally treats drug addicts in psychiatric hospitals or at outpatient narcotics clinics (of which there are 21 in Belarus), either as a result of court remand or self-enrollment, or in prisons. On the whole, treatment emphasizes detoxification over stabilization and rehabilitation. In April 2009, the Ministries of Health and Interior, the General Prosecutor's office, the Belarusian State University and a number of anti-drug NGO's conducted a seminar to review the possibility of mandatory treatment in lieu of criminal liability for first-time users, unless guilty of a

MINSK 00000390 004.2 OF 004

serious crime. To date no decision has been taken but seminar participants established a working group to examine the practices of foreign states and decide on the relevance of their practices to Belarus. The methadone substitution clinic opened by the Ministry of Health in Minsk in July 2009 was the second such clinic in operation. Another clinic is scheduled to be built in the city of Soligorsk in the Minsk region before the end of 2009. Both clinics are expected to serve approximately 100 people this year.

¶13. There are at least twelve small-scale NGO-run rehabilitation centers in various areas of Belarus. On the whole, availability and quality of services have improved somewhat. NGO-run centers provide for a fee rehabilitation services to both registered and

anonymous drug addicts, while government-run centers provide similar services for free but only to registered addicts. Since drug use remains highly stigmatized in Belarusian society, and because the official drug addict registry is readily available to Belarusian law enforcement and other government agencies, drug addicts still often avoid seeking treatment, fearing adverse consequences at work, at school, or in society writ large if their addiction becomes known.

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#### ----- U.S. Policy Initiatives and Programs -----

##### Bilateral Cooperation -----

¶15. The USG has not provided counter-narcotics assistance to the GOB since February 1997. Although some working-level assistance and contacts have existed in the area of law enforcement, these ceased in early 2008, when the GOB forced a drawdown of the official American presence in Belarus from 35 to 5 Americans and began denying visas to U.S. law enforcement personnel for visits. The imposition of restrictions in 2005 by the Government of Belarus on technical assistance including the taxation of humanitarian aid pose additional hurdles to cooperation. Moreover, the USG is currently prohibited from providing direct assistance to the government of Belarus, including in this sphere. Although the USG hopes for improvement in the bilateral relationship, present conditions do not permit closer cooperation.

##### The Road Ahead -----

¶16. The USG will continue to encourage Belarusian authorities to enforce their counter-narcotics laws and cooperate on cases as appropriate.  
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